

Captain Abraham Thing House  
159 Second Street  
Hallowell  
Kennebec County  
Maine

HABS No. ME-147

HABS

ME.

G. HAL

4.

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20240

## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. ME-147  
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## CAPTAIN ABRAHAM THING HOUSE

Location: 159 Second Street (west side of street), Hallowell,  
Kennebec County, Maine

Present Owner: Charles W. Gatchell

Present Occupant: Mr. and Mrs. Charles W. Gatchell

Present Use: Dwelling

Statement of Significance: This house represents a relatively rare form of Greek Revival architecture. Nominally, it is a variant of the temple-and-wings plan which forms a familiar sub-group in that style. However, by reason of the specific plan (paired duodecagons joined behind a story-and-half temple front), the intimacy of scale and detailing, and the siting, it is in fact a garden pavilion-house, referring (via Jefferson and Monticello) to this French type, as well as, by its delicacy, to English Regency work. (It is very possibly the only house of its type in Maine.)

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

## A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: Built ca. 1839 (Capt. Thing purchased the lot in 1837; taxes on the property increased from \$22.54 in 1839 to \$49.50 in 1840).
2. Architect, builder, suppliers, etc.: Unknown
3. Original and subsequent owners: The following is an incomplete chain of title to the land on which the structure stands. References are the offices of the Registrar of Deeds and Registrar of Probate, Kennebec County.

1837 Deed June 9, 1837 recorded September 30, 1837 in Book 108 page 74 (lot - no mention of building)  
James Clarke  
to  
Abraham Thing

1844 Captain Abraham Thing died on September 30, 1844 and left the house to his widow, Priscilla Thing. She died on August 11, 1851, leaving the home to be disposed of by her estate.

- 1854 Deed August 28, 1854 recorded September 2, 1854 in 6. HAL  
Book 194 page 269  
George Shackelford, Executor of the last will and  
testament of Priscilla Thing  
to  
Franklin Hathaway 4.
- 1874 Deed October 21, 1874 recorded October 28, 1874 in  
Book 300 page 120  
Caroline B. Hathaway, Eleanor Gardiner, and Laura  
W. Gardiner, heirs of Franklin Hathaway  
to  
Joseph E. Brann
- 1917 Deed August 31, 1917 recorded December 20, 1920 in  
Book 594 page 14  
Joseph E. Brann  
to  
Charles E. Brann
- 1926 Deed September 21, 1926 recorded September 24, 1926 in  
Book 634 page 443  
Charles E. Brann  
to  
Emery L. Smith and Martha L. Smith
- 1942 Deed November 27, 1942 recorded December 17, 1942 in  
Book 791 page 90 (one third of property)  
Martha L. Smith, widow of Emery L. Smith  
to  
Linwood F. Currier
- 1943 Deed August 27, 1943 recorded August 28, 1943 in  
Book 804 page 6  
Martha L. Smith and Linwood F. Currier  
to  
Irene Daigle
- 1945 Deed September 1, 1945 recorded September 1, 1945 in  
Book 828 page 26  
Irene Daigle  
to  
Margaret K. Gatchell
- 1946 Deed June 8, 1946 recorded June 10, 1946 in Book 834  
page 249  
Margaret K. Gatchell  
to  
Charles W. Gatchell

4. Original plans, construction, etc.: None

5. Alterations and additions: The exterior of the main block retains its original appearance. A significant change to the building complex occurred in the mid-20th century with the demolition of a two-story structure of unknown date which until that time stood on Third Street, at the west end of the axis, and was linked to the Thing house by an ell (which remains). Two original pediment fan lights are in storage in the house, one of six lights and one of eight lights. See also: II, B, 7 b. (Para 2); II, C, 1 b.
- B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure: None
- C. Sources of Information:
  1. Old views: The Gatchell family has three photographs, taken ca. 1950, showing the ell and the now-demolished west block.
  2. Bibliography:
    - a. Primary and unpublished sources: Kennebec County Registry of Deeds and Registry of Probate, Augusta, Maine 04330.
    - b. Secondary and published sources: None
- D. Supplemental Material: None

Prepared by Earle G. Shettleworth, Jr.  
August 1971  
and  
Alan Mast  
December 1972

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

- A. General Statement:
  1. Architectural character: The Abraham Thing house, designed ca. 1838-39, features a modified temple-and-wings plan with duodecagonal parlors projecting on either side of a temple front and a rectangular ell projecting to the rear of this grouping. It is intimate in scale, with Ionic order mouldings and delicate exterior decorative ironwork.
  2. Condition of fabric: Well-maintained
- B. Description of Exterior:
  1. Over-all dimensions: Approximately 22' x 54', modified rectangular plan, one-and-a-half stories, three-bay facade.

2. Foundations: Granite.
3. Wall construction: White matchboard with white trim. 4.
4. Framing: Standard light frame construction with wooden studs, joists and rafters.
5. Porches: The area of the temple "portico," behind the four free-standing Ionic columns, is a conservatory, glazed with sash windows reaching to the floor.
6. Chimneys: Two brick chimneys rise from the ends of the north-south axis, from fireplaces at the outermost faces of the parlors. Chimneys rise above height of main gable ridge, have flat caps above rectangular flue openings facing north-south.
7. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: Wooden main door (to entry hall on south) is panelled and set in a simple Greek Revival frame which rises to enclose a glazed transom; this is further framed on the west by an engaged Ionic column. Entry canopy bears decorative ironwork.
  - b. Windows and shutters: All windows are double-hung sash and all have louvered shutters. Floor-length conservatory windows on the east front are six panes in height, the number of panes in width varying with the interspace to be filled; central window here is Palladian motif without arch. Other windows on the ground floor of parlor wings and ell are four panes in height (same scale). Windows are simply framed, with Greek Revival corner blocks and connecting lintel moulding visible above shutters.

A modern window in the east gable breaks through the entablature, and gives onto a decorative balcony which spans central bay. Two small modern windows fill the west gable; the southern one is false, being walled inside.
8. Roof:
  - a. Shape, covering: The main block and ell are gabled, while the projecting north-south parlors are covered with polygonal hips. The covering is asphalt shingles.
  - b. Cornice, eaves: The main block, including projections, is completely encircled by full Ionic entablature. The ell has a metal gutter on the long sides, and crown moulding and fascia on the west gable.

c. Dormers: None.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

- a. Basement: Low-posted cellar extends under house. Posts are wooden (except for three modern steel supports). The cellar contains an old cistern. Brick arches stand under the parlor fireplaces.
  - b. First floor: Twin duodecagonal parlors are 16' in diameter. Each has a fireplace set on the outer face of the north-south axis. The south parlor communicates by a door in its east-northeast face with the conservatory, the north parlor by a door in its east-southeast face. The south parlor communicates to the entry hall by a door in its west-northwest face. The north parlor communicates to the den by a door in its west-southwest face. The conservatory is 22' x 3½'. The entry hall is irregular in plan, approximately 7' in its longer dimensions, and contains a straight run of stairs to the second floor, the stringer falling on the building's longitudinal axis. Dining room, 11' x 14½', has mantel from original fireplace on north wall. The approximately square den which balances the entry hall on the north side of the stairwall was originally a bedroom, as was the present kitchen beyond it to the west. Rear entry hall lies west of dining room and contains bulwark to the cellar.
  - c. Second floor: East chamber, 13'-7½" x 14'-4", is master bedroom. This chamber is covered with a segmental lathe-and-plaster east-west vault. This vault springs from heavy impost mouldings which are also the cornices for deep coves on either side. Stairs rise between two western chambers, 9'-2" x 12'-9", bedroom on north, bathroom on south. Northwest bedroom has small closet, master bedroom is served by closets under coves on north and south walls and a modern closet in southwestern corner.
  - d. Attic: None.
2. Stairways: Cellar stairs ascend (first by granite, then by brick steps) to bulwark in rear entry hall. Central wooden stairway rises west-to-east from entry hall to small landing on second floor which communicates to the three chambers on that floor.

3. Flooring: Original flooring in conservatory is composed of 4" to 6" boards, varnished. Entry hall has narrow boards, HABS varnished. Parlors have narrow boarding. ME.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Plaster and wallpaper. 6 HAL  
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5. Doorways and doors: Nearly all doors carry characteristic heavy Greek Revival architraves with corner blocks. The two axial parlor doorways are each set in an aedicular Ionic frame of pilasters and entablature block, the pilaster sections of this frame being set against the two faces of the dodecagon adjacent to the doorway. These axial doorways have double sliding doors, each with four panels of equal size. They have hinged blocks which lift to admit doorknobs, so doors fully enter wall. Other doors are single and most feature eight panels of alternating lengths.
6. Decorative features and trim: West wall of conservatory bears two original 4' wide mirrors in the same Greek Revival architraves used for doors and windows.
7. Notable hardware: None.
8. Lighting: Modern electric fixtures.
9. Heating: Modern central heating.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: House is sited on crest of an informally terraced embankment approximately 100' above sidewalk grade on Second Street in quiet residential neighborhood in southern portion of Hallowell.
2. Enclosures: None.
3. Outbuildings: Later barn and garage on Third Street.
4. Walks: There is a walk ascending from Second Street to the house; this has a section of wooden steps. There is another walk from Third Street to the main entrance.
5. Landscaping: Large trees and shrubbery are arranged informally.

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PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

These records were made during 1971 and 1972 in the course of a photo-data project in the cities of Bath, Hallowell, Monmouth, and Richmond in the State of Maine. The project was arranged in response to the initiative of Mrs. Linda B. Clark of Row House, Inc., in Hallowell, Dr. Charles E. Burden of the Bath Marine Museum, Mrs. Paul L. Roberts of the Richmond Historical and Cultural Society, and Mr. H. Earle Flanders of Monmouth. All of these preservationists actively solicited or contributed funds and effectively fostered increased interest in the architectural heritage of their respective communities. The project was under the general direction of James C. Massey, at that time Chief of the Historic American Buildings Survey; was supervised in the field by Denys Peter Myers, then Principal Architectural Historian of HABS; was carried on by Student Architectural Historian Earle G. Shettleworth, Jr., Boston University; and was continued by Alan Mast, Maine Arts and Humanities Commission, and Mary-Eliza Wengren (Mrs. Richard E., Jr.), Maine Historic Preservation Commission, under the field supervision of Earle G. Shettleworth, Jr. Photographers were Mark C. Bisgrove, Sylvester Cobbs, Stanley Schwartz, Leon P. Shepard, and Richard Dwight Sturgis.